

6 October 2015

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Planning and Countryside

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Dear Sir or Madam

Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion

This letter sets out the screening opinion by West Berkshire Council concerning the need for SEA and HRA in relation to the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan. This screening opinion has been underpinned by a detailed report and the opinions of the three statutory consultation bodies who are Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.

The screening process undertaken concluded that an Environmental Assessment is not considered to be required to accompany the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan and it would not need to be subject to HRA. The consultation bodies have all agreed with the conclusion reached. The reasons for the decision are set out below:

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Stratfield Mortimer has been designated as a rural service centre in the adopted West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan Document (July 2012). An SA/SEA was produced throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy meaning that the overall spatial strategy and the housing distribution strategy of the Core Strategy have been tested.

In July 2014 the Council published the Preferred Options version of the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD for consultation. Site selection work has been carried out on sites in Mortimer and the site being considered for development in the Neighbourhood Development Plan has therefore already been subject to SA/SEA through that process.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan has been assessed as to the likely significant effects in accordance with the criteria set out within Annex II of the European Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of the Regulations. Based on the findings, the Council's

conclusion is that a SEA of the Stratfield Mortimer NDP is not necessary under the SEA Directive and Regulations because it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant environmental effects as a result of the NDP.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment of all Core Strategy policies and the emerging Housing Site Allocations DPD have been undertaken to ensure that either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, the policies do not adversely affect any of the SACs or the buffer area for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

The neighbourhood area is not in close proximity to any of the three SACs in the District. A very small area falls within the 5km buffer area of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and part of the area is within the 7km buffer area. The 5km boundary has been determined by Natural England as a buffer to regulate development near the SPA.

The Core Strategy sets out the thresholds for when residential development would require screening to assess whether they will have a likely significant effect on the SPA. The NDP does not propose to allocate development of this scale within either the 5km or 7km buffer areas and it is therefore considered unnecessary to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of the NDP.

The Council has concluded that the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan in itself will have no significant adverse impact on the integrity of nature conservation sites of international importance. Furthermore, individual planning applications if necessary can undergo HRA.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Dawn Reid
Senior Planning Policy Officer